

ART FOR WAR VETERANS

New York, Museum
of Modern Art

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LIBRARY

WAR VETERANS
ART CENTER

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MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART



A Veteran is interviewed by Victor D'Amico, Director of the Center, to determine the kind of class best suited to his needs.

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<i>Wood Engraving and Book Illustration</i>	Kendall T. Bassett
<i>Woodworking Design</i>	

art for war veterans

The primary function of the War Veterans' Art Center is not to find artists, but to help veterans find themselves. Therefore, examples of the veterans' creative efforts in this Bulletin and in the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art are used to show how art may serve the veteran. They are not presented as accomplished products.

The realization that art can provide profound personal gratification and play an important role in developing personality is no recent discovery. In its service to the veteran it can do more than entertain; it can revive his spiritual vigor and help him to find greater enjoyment and security. The feeling of personal satisfaction, of release from tension, of physical and emotional relaxation, is generally a basic factor in the veteran's reconversion to civilian life. Whether the veteran is seeking diversion or a new vocation, the War Veterans' Art Center attempts to meet and solve his problem in the light of the individual.

The major responsibility of the Center, and of all agencies which undertake to guide and develop these veterans, is to be intelligent and as considerate as possible in evaluating their abilities. Upon wise guidance may rest the difference between help or hindrance. The War Veterans' Art Center, established by the Museum of Modern Art in October 1944, is an effort to provide a solution. Its program, briefly, is based on the following principles:

1. *Personal Satisfaction.* By starting with simple projects, concrete results are attained in a minimum of time, and thus the veteran is quickly reassured of his ability to go ahead.
2. *Individual Instruction.* For one who does not know where his talent, power, or interest lies, the first object of the Center is to evaluate his ability. He first decides on which course will prove most satisfying. Instruction is individual. There is no set time schedule. He starts when he is ready, and progresses at his own pace.
3. *Creativeness.* Perhaps the most important part of the program is that creativeness is stressed and imitative methods of working are discouraged. Once a veteran learns to express, through art, his own ideas, he has made the first important step in his struggle to assure himself of his importance as an independent and developing personality.
4. *Fundamentals.* Dilettante methods and projects of mere entertainment value are carefully avoided. The veteran is introduced at once to the fundamentals, because a knowledge of them in any art gives him the opportunity to progress as far as his interest and ability will allow.

EACH VETERAN IS DIFFERENT



INDIVIDUAL INSTRUCTION

Every man and woman is recognized as an individual. Personal interests, aptitudes, background and learning capacity are taken into consideration and therefore instruction for each person is different. One comes to the Center with only curiosity; another because of a recent experience he has had in art at a USO Center, or during his period of hospitalization; another has been recommended by his physician, or because he has made a high score in aptitude tests. Then there is a considerable proportion of returned servicemen and servicewomen who elect art with the hope of making it a vocation or profession. All these varied interests must be channeled by the instructor of each class offered at the War Veterans' Art Center into a homogeneous plan.

Our major aim is to guide and develop the veteran's ability and interest so that he may feel a real sense of fulfillment, whether his ultimate goal is art as a profession or a diversion.

A series of projects beginning with elementary and simple tasks, and progressing to complex and advanced problems, is arranged for each class. The instructor recommends, or the veteran chooses, the project best suited to his interest and ability. A man with no previous experience in painting chooses the first and simplest project, while the man who has painted before will start at a more advanced stage. When a veteran has gained sufficient power and independence, he may plan his own program with the guidance of his instructor, proceeding at his own speed, and from time to time entering into a general discussion on art with the class, or taking part in group criticisms of class work.

"LIKE A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP"



PERSONAL SATISFACTION

One veteran expressed very aptly the value of the arts in meeting the needs of returning servicemen and servicewomen. After completing a painting, on which he had worked intently for some time, he said, "This experience is as good as a good night's

sleep." Ordinarily one judges the value of art by the quality of the product, but here the condition is reversed. One evaluates the product by its effect upon its creator. *It is what happens to the man that counts, not the quality of the result.* Naturally if the man's basic needs are put first, and his creative capacity and skill are developed simultaneously, the product will also improve in expressiveness and technical achievement. By recognizing the advantages to the individual, the emphasis is put on the man rather than the work, and it is from this fundamental concept that the whole program of the Center is growing and expanding.

The development of personal satisfaction in achieving and experiencing early success is the primary consideration to be realized in working with veterans. Is there an immediate reduction of frustration, timidity, or impatience? Does the veteran work with greater spirit and originality, and with less slavish imitation and mere technical routine? At the beginning, most veterans use art as a means of getting rid of disturbing experiences which they try to project onto paper or canvas. A former Navy man paints a vivid recollection of an experience at Pearl Harbor. Another starts jewelry to ease his mind, and mounts his war emblems as gifts, thus sharing his experience with others. In ceramics a veteran pounds clay, shaping and reshaping its form, to prove himself master of the medium.

Happily, after this period of emotional release, the veteran relinquishes his preoccupation with the war. The war themes of the sailor disappeared from his canvas, and he began to use his own environment, drawing freely on his imagination for ideas. The veteran in jewelry class has proved one of our best designers, and he says that jewelry making helped him to overcome many troublesome thoughts. Now he makes jewelry at home, and some day would like to start a school for others. By first expressing his disturbance through an art form, the veteran recreates it and divorces it from himself forever. Then he is ready to recognize the characteristics which set him apart from others, and to take pride in expressing this difference creatively.

"I WANT THE FUNDAMENTALS"



PREVOCATIONAL TRAINING

During interviews with the Director, veterans often remark, "I want to learn the fundamentals of jewelry," or sculpture, or whatever art they choose to follow. This reveals the earnestness of their interest and their intention to make a serious effort. It is desirable to have a working knowledge of the fundamentals of the arts, whatever the veteran's interest may be. Even if he is taking art as a diversion, the success of his attempts and the resulting satisfaction will depend on the soundness of his learning. For example, one man said he wanted to learn perspective. After a simple exercise in angular perspective, in which the veteran made a careful study of a corner of the studio, the instructor suggested that he make another, freer drawing of the same subject and paint it. The result showed not only the veteran's knowledge of perspective, which he had gained through the exercise, but it also brought out his sensitivity to line, and his feeling for design and color in the rendering of shapes.



At the War Veterans' Art Center, everyone is encouraged to create as soon as possible, out of the fund of his experience, and through his reactions to the world which surrounds him. Every effort is made to keep him from the imitation that leads only to dead ends and final frustration. When a veteran can say and feel with conviction, "THIS IS MY OWN," he has discovered his potentiality as a creative person, and a whole new world opens before him. One man in the Silk Screen Class, who, through previous training, had been copying and had learned to depend on this method for success, was weaned away from this manner of working by a gradual and tactful method of substituting simple creative projects for imitative ones. Toward the end of the term, he was working on an original silk screen, which he jokingly and proudly referred to as "my masterpiece." It was a composition of his back yard in the Bronx.

Through the creative process, this veteran had learned to observe and interpret the world through

his own eyes, and to express his feelings about it in his own distinct way. This is the *true aim of the Center*—to open up such a world to every veteran who comes for guidance and training. The creative method demands that the individual observe life and express his reaction to it. He selects and invents, he draws freely on his imagination as he manipulates texture, form, color, and material in his efforts to express ideas. In contrast, all methods of imitation enslave both the spirit and the individual's power to become independent. Copying a design or theme makes one subservient to the thing or person one copies. A man may be deceived in believing he is achieving the same standard or result as its originator, but when he discovers the deception he suffers damaging frustration.

Some schools feel that imitation is an easy way for the beginner to get started in an art or craft, but any confidence gained by such a process is usually lost when the individual tries to design something on his own. Also it is believed skill and technique are valuable in themselves because they absorb individual interests and divert one from disturbing preoccupations. But the absorption is only partial, for as soon as the man becomes deft at a skill, the mental challenge and absorption are reduced, leaving the mind to dwell on any outside disturbances. However, once a man begins to look at things creatively, and finds a challenge in his own back yard, then his skill will naturally serve as an instrument to help him further and further toward his ideal of self-expression.

A VETERAN JOINS THE CENTER

Any veteran, man or woman, who has been in our country's service, is invited to join the War Veterans' Art Center. Instruction and materials are free. However, many of the veterans have asked to pay for their own materials, and that cost fee has been set at \$10.00 for courses meeting twice a week, \$5.00 for those meeting once a week, for three months. Upon applying to the Center, each applicant has a personal interview with the Director to determine the kind of work best suited to him.

Applicants who are accepted may enter a class at any time because instruction is individual. The training period is three months long, beginning whenever the veteran enters.

There are eleven classes: Orientation; Beginning Drawing and Painting; Advanced Drawing and Painting; Jewelry and Metalwork; Sculpture and Ceramics; Design Workshop; Woodworking Design; Wood Engraving and Book Illustration; Graphic Arts; Silk Screen Printing; Lettering, Layout, and Typography. If a man desires a certain class, but has had no experience in that type of work, or if he has had preliminary training and needs reorientation, he is admitted for a period of three months—24 sessions for classes meeting twice a week, and 12 for those meeting once a week. At the end of that time he may be reentered for another three-month period if it seems desirable. Veterans are chosen on the basis of their need, their length of service, and the ability of the Center to accommodate them. The choice is made by the Director after a personal interview. Classes are held week nights, Monday through Friday, from seven until ten. There are no day classes at present, but there is a provision for them and they will be introduced whenever there is a sufficient demand.

REORIENTATION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

The will to help, and the ability to help, are not the same thing. Many good intentions directed toward the returning veteran may not only be wasted, but may even harm him. The War Veterans' Art Center was created to discover the best and the most effective ways of bringing about, through the arts, the readjustment of the veteran to civilian life. Two major fundamentals are basic to this objective: the capacity to discover the nature and extent of each veteran's aptitude, and the means of developing it to his best advantage.

For many veterans, an art experience during service has aroused in them a desire to become skilled in one art field or another. Some of these men are actually potential artists and craftsmen, whose talent has until now lain dormant, but who, with the correct training, can eventually become

professionals. There are many, however, who seek art as a future life work, but who lack the ability to succeed at it. They are headed for frustration and failure unless they receive prompt and adequate guidance. Their desire for art should not be discouraged, for many of the untalented will derive more personal benefit from the art experience than the talented and potentially professional persons.

From the beginning, the Center has attempted to encourage all degrees of creative power, and to find ways of instruction that are both practical and effective. New methods of sustaining interest and developing creative power had to be discovered. Some of the methods used at the Center were developed by trial and error, some by insight, but most of them were the result of a reconversion of the sum total of the teaching experience of the entire staff. The description of the various classes and the work illustrated in this Bulletin, and in the exhibition on view at the Museum of Modern Art, are a record of the experience and teaching methods which we have developed.

The success of the enterprise is partially evident in the work here illustrated, but the greater measure of the success lies in the changed lives of the veterans, which, unfortunately, cannot be adequately shown in an exhibition or expressed in print. One thing is certain, the veteran is a unique individual in the history of art teaching. He is both young and old—young in his development in art, and old in his accumulation and intensity of human experience. He is deadly serious and works with an enthusiasm and concentration that is rare in younger art students. Art holds something of life which the veteran feels he has missed. This idea is repeated again and again by the men and women who have come to the Center. It is perhaps best expressed by an ex-infantryman—"I had a lot of time to think while I was in service. I decided that life should be more than routine living and grubbing for money, and I promised myself that if I ever came out alive I was going to do a lot of the things that are worthwhile. Art is one of them. That's why I'm here!"

VICTOR D'AMICO

classes at the center



ORIENTATION—meets 2 sessions a week, 3 hours a session

Veterans who have a desire for art, but who do not know in what field their ability lies, can explore their possibilities in the Orientation Class. This class offers a number of simple projects designed to examine the veteran's aptitude in a variety of fields. Each project is planned to examine such qualities as creative power, skill, and concentration, and leads to one of the special courses offered at the Center. For example, if a veteran shows imagination and skill in handling a plastic medium, he may enter

the class in Sculpture and Ceramics. The object is to make projects practical and challenging, but fundamental to the arts they represent. As soon as an aptitude for any medium is discovered, the veteran may join the class specializing in it. True orientation, however, involves more than developing skill or discovering creative talent. It includes helping the individual to surmount emotional and physical barriers for the ultimate purpose of increasing security and enriching personality.



SCULPTURE AND CERAMICS

meets 2 sessions a week,

3 hours a session

Sculpture and ceramics offer extensive opportunities for those who need an absorbing and quieting activity. The cool, moist clay is soothing and its plasticity allows for easy change of form and a feeling of mastery over one's work. A veteran may choose either sculpture or ceramics, or he may combine some of both. Sculpture problems include modeling in clay or carving in plaster, and eventually in limestone and marble for those who become sufficiently advanced. Ceramics covers elementary problems of pottery construction, decoration, glazing, and firing.



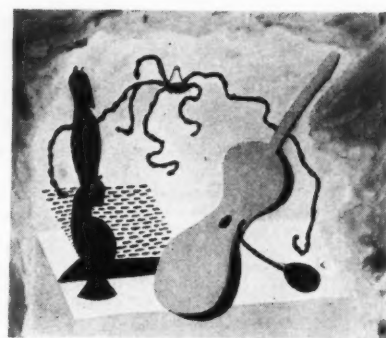
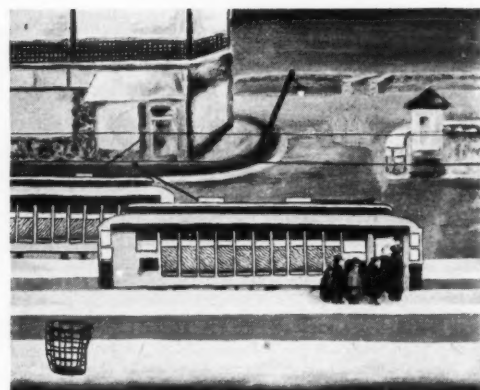
Right: Pottery thrown on the wheel. Below: First projects by veterans with no previous experience in pottery making.



BEGINNING PAINTING AND DRAWING—meets 2 sessions a week, 3 hours a session

The class is organized for returning servicemen and servicewomen who have had no training whatsoever in art, or who have had so little that they feel its value is negligible. The major obstacle in teaching the beginner is not the lack of training, but the lack of self-confidence and the tendency to become easily discouraged. The instructor, therefore, introduces elementary problems so that every veteran can achieve some measure of success easily and quickly.

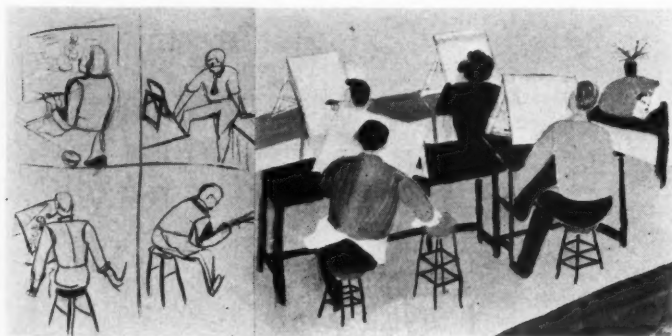
Exercises are devised to meet the veteran's immediate desire for technique or skill, but also to develop his imagination and creative power. For example, a veteran who wished to learn perspective developed his perspective drawing into a freely decorative pattern. The experience forced an interplay between observation and imagination. Observation was developed by drawing from still life and the human figure, while imagination was developed by problems which called upon the visual memory, fantasy, or emotional expression.



Right, top to bottom: *Car Stop Near Home*, by a veteran in class 13 weeks. *Still life and Mexican Scene* by a former WAC.

In class 24 weeks.

Below: A WAC, still in service, learned to build a picture from sketches. *In class 5 weeks.*

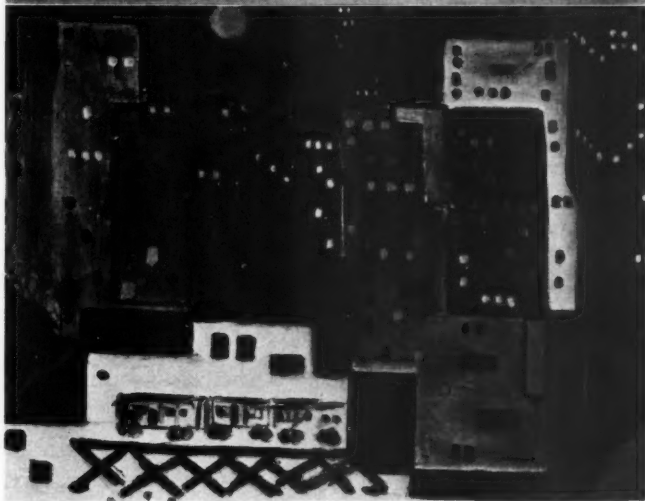


ADVANCED DRAWING AND PAINTING

meets 2 sessions a week,
3 hours a session

Veterans who have had previous training in art are eligible for the Advanced Drawing and Painting Class. The instructor has a personal interview with each new member to familiarize him with the aims and organization of the class. He is assured that he will receive personal attention and that learning to draw is not difficult if one has the will and makes a reasonable effort. The two sessions of the class held each week are divided between drawing from the model and painting. Part of the time is given to discussions on class work and to general talks on art.

In his first exercise, the veteran is encouraged to express something he knows or feels intimately. Many paint their war experiences. This exercise affords the instructor an opportunity to discover the veteran's interest and ability, and to determine the kind of help he needs. Creative work is drawn entirely from the imagination so that the veteran will learn to depend on his own ideas and incentives from the start.



Top: First oil painting. A war scene painted from memory. This veteran was a commercial artist, but had never worked in oils.

Center: An imaginative picture expressing space and loneliness by a veteran who had majored in art in high school.

Right: An abstract painting of a city theme, painted by a former sailor. He had no previous formal training, but did abstractions on his own.

WOOD ENGRAVING AND BOOK ILLUSTRATION—meets 1 three-hour session a week



LETTERING, LAYOUT AND TYPOGRAPHY—meets 1 three-hour session a week

The class is planned to examine the veteran's aptitude and to give him an idea of what will be expected of him if he chooses this type of work as a vocation. We do not presume to give vocational training, but attempt to establish a comprehension of design and a command of the basic skills for those who have a vocational interest.

As not all who elect the class are suited to this work, a major object is to help the veteran discover for himself whether he possesses the necessary patience, concentration, and skill. Some veterans, however, choose the class for the special purpose of developing such powers. One veteran was recommended by his physician to take the class to strengthen his right arm which had been injured in service. He was also advised to train his left hand in the event that he might lose the use of the other. After six months study he learned to use his left hand almost as effectively as his right.

Wood Engraving imposes a strict discipline in patience and technical skill. Veterans entering this class are carefully chosen for these qualities. From the standpoint of the craft, the object is to develop creative expression through a black and white medium. Because the veterans who took this course had had no previous experience in wood engraving, they were unprejudiced and easily directed. The first problem is to make an abstract design, and to work for different textures and values. They work directly on the block so that they get a feeling for the materials and tools. Through these experiences they are taught the essentials of white line engraving, the function of the tools, and the nature of the woods used. Printing the block provides the thrill of seeing one's first engraving completed. Once self-confidence is established, the veterans can express their abilities in various directions.

The three-hour session is divided into two parts: one hour of drawing from the life model, and two hours of engraving on the block. Drawing is the basis for Wood Engraving and Book Illustration. While few may be able to follow wood engraving as a profession, the medium offers excellent opportunities for offsetting certain types of emotional instability and for building skill in drawing.

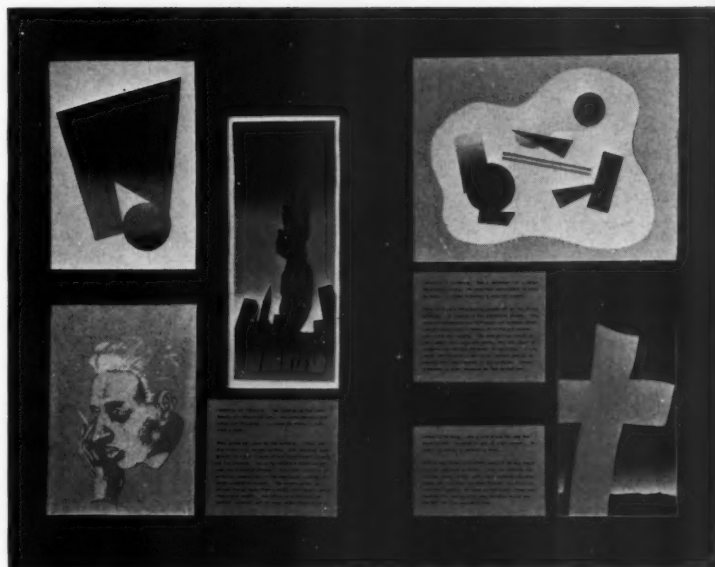


Panel illustrating beginning exercises in LETTERING. Done in free pen strokes without previous drawing-in or laying-out of background, they acquaint the student with the form of letters and create an awareness of space and pattern.

SILK SCREEN PRINTING—meets 1 three-hour session a week

The aim of this course is to capture the veteran's interest with work that makes demands on his creative ability and manual dexterity. If the exercise is simple enough to insure a good measure of success, it results in the re-establishment of self-confidence. The first exercise given to the veterans involves the simple drawing and arrangement of three geometric shapes which are made into stencils and printed. After this the exercises become more difficult according to varying ability and growth of power of the veterans. Silk screen is appealing because it is easy to reproduce color, and because one works on a large scale.

The technique of printing can be easily mastered in a short time so that it offers a quick means for a vocation. Several of the men in the class secured positions as silk screen printers before the term had expired. If one takes to the medium, he can progress in the work and make a comfortable livelihood out of it.



GRAPHIC ARTS—meets 1 three-hour session a week

The Graphic Arts Class includes a variety of black and white processes: woodblock, dry point, etching, aquatint, and lithograph which offer opportunity for relaxation. Working with a variety of tools and media, preparing the plate or block, the satisfaction in printing, and the element of surprise in seeing one's drawing come out in reverse, all lend excitement to the experience. An advantage of this work is that a veteran can get quick results and feel the sense of accomplishment. The object is not to develop graphic artists, but to provide an outlet for the veteran's creative expression and relieve tension and nervousness and strengthen the weak hands and muscles of those veterans who need it. A few of the veterans who took this class did show enough ability to pursue graphic arts on a professional level, but the greater satisfaction came in seeing men who at first were timid and whose fingers fumbled, attack a new block or plate with a sure hand and confident spirit.



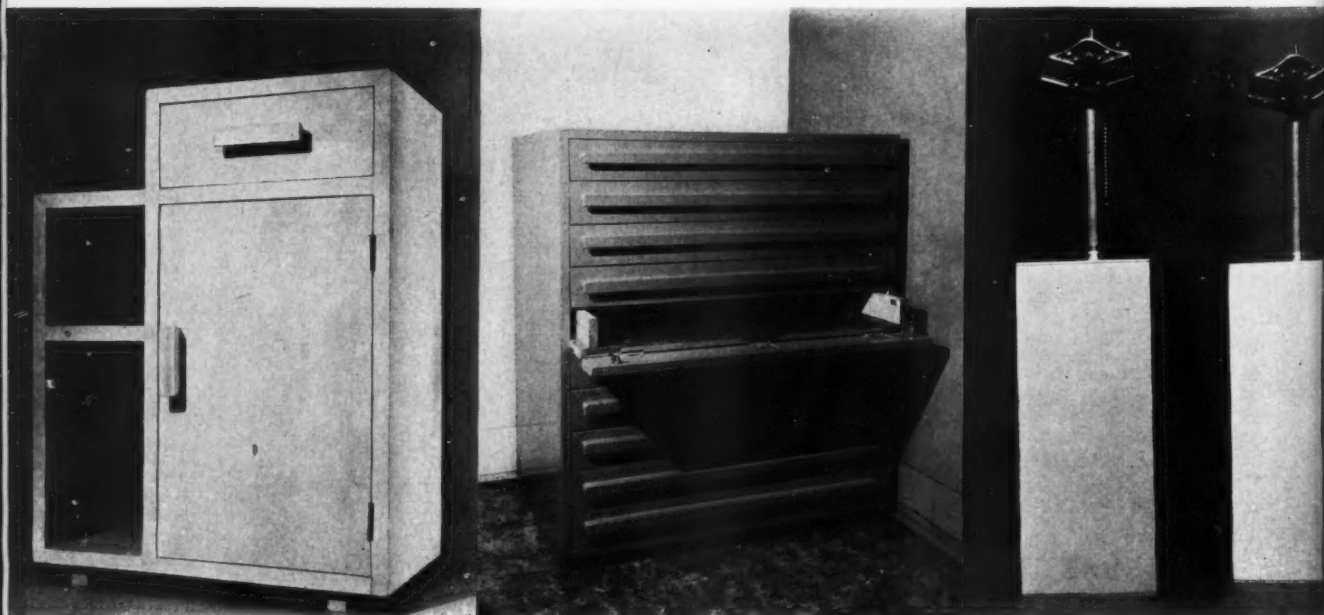
WOODWORKING DESIGN—meets 2 sessions a week, 3 hours a session



The class in Woodworking Design attempts to develop design and craftsmanship. None of the veterans who joined the class had training in design and only a few had previous experience in woodwork. The program consists of a series of projects graded in difficulty, from which a veteran may choose according to his background and experience. Design and construction are the basic problems for most veterans. Several methods for understanding of form were developed, such as building a paper model for a piece of furniture, or modeling a frame in wax. This was followed by sketching in perspective and making working drawings. Each veteran explores the basic principles of construction, the nature of wood, and learns to use both hand and power tools as he progresses.

Many of the veterans elect woodworking on the advice of their physician as a corrective for some physical or emotional disability. For example, a former tool maker had received a head injury in service which impaired the control of his left hand. He was advised to do lathe turning to build up his muscular control. Another with a speech defect was recommended to the class because his doctors believe that the development of muscular coordination will improve his speech. In many of these cases, progress was noted after a period of six weeks to nine months.

Below left: Cabinet by a veteran with no shop or design experience before joining the Woodworking Design Class. In class 22 weeks. Center: Storage cabinet for color reproductions by a veteran who had had considerable shop experience, but never had designed or completed a piece of furniture by himself. Right: Lamp bases by a veteran in class 7 weeks.



DESIGN WORKSHOP—meets 2 sessions a week, 3 hours a session

The Design Workshop explores aptitudes of veterans who wish to train for vocations relating to industrial design, architecture, interior design, or machine art. While it does not presume to fit these veterans for vocations, it establishes an understanding and lays a basic foundation of information, techniques, and skills. The veteran is introduced to qualities of natural and synthetic materials, processes of construction, organization of form, and graphic representation as integral parts of designing for machine production.

The interests of veterans in this class have ranged from the desire to learn a special technique such as drafting, to the wish to acquire a general background preliminary to entering an architectural school. In each case, the instructor attempts to reveal the veterans' potentiality and to give him a broad foundation. After an orientation period in the class, veterans who wish to specialize are recommended to a vocational school or college.



JEWELRY AND METALWORK—meets 2 sessions a week, 3 hours a session

Jewelry making and metalwork can be completely satisfying or frustrating to a beginner. Without guidance, he is apt to plunge into making a complex piece of jewelry and become lost in technical difficulties, or he may try to copy an article which he saw in a shop window and sacrifice his own creative possibilities. For this reason, projects are suggested and graded from those which appeal to the imagination, but are easy to carry out, to more advanced projects which develop creativeness and skill. Jewelry projects begin with simple pieces bent and hammered out of a single wire, to more advanced work which requires modeling, setting stones, or enameling.

This medium uses a variety of processes, tools, and rigid materials which offer the opportunity for correcting various types of emotional insecurity and physical disabilities. A former WAC chose jewelry making because, "My nerves are going to pieces." She thought clay was too soft a medium for developing the control she needed. This craft is also practical for veterans who require a sedentary occupation because of spinal, leg, or other physical injuries. The class attempts to train those who wish to use jewelry as a leisure time activity, or as a possible vocation.



MUSEUM NOTES

EXHIBITIONS

Museum Collection of Painting and Sculpture: Originally scheduled to close November 4, this first general exhibition of the Collection has been extended to January 13. With the exception of a few substitutions because of circulating exhibitions commitments, it will be the same comprehensive showing which proved so popular during the summer.

Modern Textiles: Aug. 28-Sept. 23 in the Auditorium Galleries. Prepared for the Museum's Circulating Exhibitions program it provides a brief survey of modern textile design including not only the work of well known professionals but also textiles designed by students of Black Mountain College, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Chicago Institute of Design, and the University of California.

Costume Carnival: Sept. 18-Nov. 25 in the Young People's Gallery. Designed primarily for children: costumes in paper sculpture by Erica Gorecka-Egan, cutouts, drawings and an entertaining merry-go-round of ten figures spanning the fashions of many centuries. After its New York showing, the exhibition will be circulated to schools and small galleries throughout the country.

Art for War Veterans: Sept. 25-Nov. 25 in the Auditorium Galleries. An exhibition showing the value of art to returning servicemen and women; sponsored by the War Veterans' Art Center Committee.

Elements of Design: Oct. 9-Dec. 2. A new experiment in visual education. On twenty-four cardboard panels, 20 x 25" in size, ideas basic to all designing are introduced in dramatic pictorial form. Large photographs, photomontages, drawings and color reproductions tell the story. Examples of design are drawn from every field: painting, sculpture, architecture, and natural and human forms. The panels are reproduced by a multiple technique developed by the Museum's Department of Circulating Exhibitions to make possible the sale of small exhibitions for little more than it would cost to rent them.

Suart Davis: Oct. 16-Feb. 3. This one-man exhibition of an artist who is today accepted as one of the leaders of the American vanguard begins with work exhibited in the celebrated Armory Show of 1913 when the artist was nineteen years old and will illustrate his development to the present day. The exhibition will consist of approximately fifty oil paintings, mural panels, drawings and watercolors. Directed by James Johnson Sweeney.

PUBLICATIONS

Painting and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art: Supplementary list (July 1942-April 1945) to the book of the same name; an extension of the printed record listing the paintings and sculptures in the Museum Collection, giving name, nationality and dates of artist, and title, date, medium, size and provenance of works of art and where they are reproduced. Paper; 16 pages; 33 plates; 25 cents. Price of *Painting and Sculpture* with Supplement \$1.25 net (desk sale 85 cents net).

Tomorrow's Small House: A reprint of *Bulletin* Vol. XII No. 5 with cover; 20 pages; 50 cents.

NEW TRUSTEE ELECTED

At the last meeting of the Board of Trustees Randal H. MacDonald was elected a member of the Board. Mr. MacDonald has long been interested in modern art and in various educational and philanthropic activities. He is Chairman of the Yale Alumni Fund and of the St. Paul's School Alumni Fund, a Director of the Young Men's Christian Association and Chairman of the West Side Branch, a Trustee of Pratt Institute, Governor on the New York Stock Exchange, and a partner in the firm of Dominick & Dominick.

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